

Social Service Series

**THE PRACTICE OF
CITIZENSHIP**

Griffith

**The Welfare of Each
Is the Concern of All**

Monograph

THE PRACTICE OF CITIZENSHIP

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American Baptist Publication Society

Philadelphia

Boston

Chicago

St. Louis

Toronto, Can.

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A. J. ROWLAND, Secretary
Published May, 1914

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THE PRACTICE OF CITIZENSHIP

THERE are three great institutions that have marked and aided man's onward and upward progress: the family, the Church, and the State. Each is implied in the nature of man as a social being. Each serves a necessary function in the economy of life. Each supplements the whole of all the others. In logic and time the family antedates the Church and the State. In a real sense the family is the seed-plot of all the other institutions of man's life. Government first appeared in the primitive family; and the ideas and institutions of religion are all based upon family life and relations.

In early times the institutions of religion and of government were one and the same. In these later times the Church and the State have become separate institutions, each with its own organization, functions, and officers. Along with this growth of the State as an institution has gone a development of its functions and an increase of its duties. Government existed originally that it might protect its members from violence and injustice. Now it seeks to guarantee the fullest degree of liberty to the indi-

vidual in his personal, intellectual, religious, political, economic, and social life. More than that, the State is becoming one of the chief agencies through which all of the people can cooperate in their search after justice and the progress of society. That is, the negative and defensive functions of government are becoming less and less prominent, and its positive and promotive functions are becoming more and more potent. The State will wax rather than wane in the days to come.

Social progress implies the march of all together; and it demands the cooperation of all in behalf of the common welfare. It is necessary that every citizen should understand his calling and should fulfil his obligations.

The Meaning of Citizenship.

Government, law, and order are prerequisites to a well-ordered community and State. As usually considered, citizenship signifies the enjoyment and benefits of the privileges afforded by government. It means, however, much more. Citizenship implies an active responsibility also for the government and its acts. Sonship in the family means that the privileges of the home are the son's, and also that the obligation to protect that home, to be loyal to its best traditions, obedient to its authority, working to further its interests, and actively ambitious for its advancement, constitutes a part of his rela-

tionship to the home. Thus a citizen of this republic assumes important duties. It does not alter his responsibility whether those duties are performed or neglected by his associates and acquaintances: his obligation to the government is a personal matter. Some American citizens, as saloonkeepers, may be violating the Sunday observance law. That applicant for citizenship through naturalization who declares before the court his intention of keeping his saloon open on Sunday as his right for the reason that others do, may be denied consequently the boon of citizenship. The higher courts of Illinois recently upheld such a decree of a lower court.

Obligations which accompany citizenship are somewhat similar to the marriage vows: they are personal. The failure to love, cherish, and protect his wife makes one a violator of his vows. The failure to be an active, good citizen brands one as an ungrateful son of his country. The obligations of citizenship devolve upon all citizens; there is no distinction by classes. All claim the rights and privileges of citizenship; the nation has claims on all. Nevertheless some plead business cares; others object to the management of affairs as attempted by some faction and so refrain from assuming a part of the active responsibilities; while others are too theoretical; and still others have so-called religious scruples. It is the vicious, the worst, elements in American life that aspire to an activity in politics every day of the week. Popular govern-

ment cannot depend upon such persons ; it demands every man's activity in its support.

The question might be raised, why is one prohibited from destroying the railroad or from interfering with its rights and property. The railroad is an essential factor in the present-day civilization and touches the life of every individual. One must be not only passively no lawbreaker with reference to the railroad ; he must as well be actively restraining others from an overt act intended to injure the property and personal rights of the corporation, should he be aware of their purpose. He must contribute his positive support to all good institutions which seek to enhance the security of human life by increasing its efficiency and by adding to its happiness.

In theory this is all admitted ; in history it has been substantiated ; but in practice to-day the institution of citizenship frequently has lost its broadest and best aspect. The selfish side of man has too often been accentuated. Men may, nominally, be good citizens when their immediate financial interests are to be furthered. Too often they are so absorbed in money-making that they have no time for the duties of instituted government. Too often the pleasure of the hour, the creature comforts of the immediate present, make avowed traitors and rebels out of otherwise good citizens.

In the days now past, or passing, the practice of good citizenship required a loyalty to the country

and government chiefly in times of war. That man was patriotic and loyal who carried a musket in the din of battle. He volunteered to become a target for others, gladly laying down his life, if occasion required, on the altar of his country. He would give up life itself for the human rights and grand principles of freedom which had been approved by himself and by his fellow men. He volunteered to sacrifice his life that others might live. And thus monuments have been erected and statues reared on high to the men who were brave in going to war; to the men of unselfish service to nation and to fellow men. And what a splendid altruistic service and practice of citizenship that was. All honor to the men who fought the battles of humanity on the gory fields of war. All honor to the men, women, and children who are fighting life's battles heroically for others anywhere.

Obligations of Citizenship.

The call of citizenship to-day is the call to service; a call as persistent, as urgent, and as universal as was ever the bugle call; a call to every citizen to a heroic, patriotic, and actively aggressive service for fellow men.

Uprightness of Life.

That one may practise citizenship properly there are two or more prerequisites. In the olden days

the man was required to have good physical qualities for marching and good arms and hands for fighting. To-day he needs a wholesome and sane character, a well-developed manhood, an assertive uprightness of life's best ideals. One of the United States Circuit Courts has declared that a man "must have behaved—conducted himself—as a man of good character ordinarily would, should, or does." The attacks which come are not so apt to be from serried foes in armor, or in battle array, as from the cohorts of sordid debauchery and selfish allurements. To be an efficient citizen demands that one should be unselfishly serving society. To yield to the demands of personal advancement to-day is as cowardly and unworthy as it was in the days when the nation called upon one to battle for country. To resist successfully the ever-present commercial interest of to-day, and consequently sacrifice the future material joys, requires a well-rounded character. It is natural for the hills, the sunshine, the rain, and the soil to serve man through their well-established formulas of existence. Likewise man, another manifestation of nature, must be consistent in his life, in his life plans and aims, with his very being. If he is consistent, he will develop his life in service. A subject who has but a small share in the monarchical government of his country need not possess a composite character with qualities well developed; but not so with the citizen.

Understanding of Political Questions.

The citizen needs also an understanding of the explicit functions of all government, together with a knowledge of the development and growth of his particular nation. The history of what our ancestors accomplished and aspired to accomplish is a wonderful stimulus to complete citizenship. The study of their lives devoted to the public good, of their personal integrity and virtue inspires to present lofty endeavor and to consequent achievements. The consideration of their national problems aids in the conquest of the present. Every citizen should know the principles of his government; he should understand what the philosophy of his government is, what it attempts, and the means by which those results are sought. The purpose of his government will determine whether the public-school system, for instance, should include vocational studies, as typewriting, stenography, etc., in its curriculum, and whether there should be much Latin, or the valuable social sciences. If the results desired are not being secured, the citizens must be able to locate the cause of the failure. It may be due to the mistakes of the office-holder, or it may be due to the limitations of law and the constitution. There is no one else to rectify the failures other than the citizen.

Then he must be ready, if need be, to support and advocate new methods and modifications of the old

when needed. No government has been perfect and, as conditions are constantly changing and since government is one of the several devices to aid society, it too must adjust itself to the needs of the changing popular demand.

Hunger for Social Justice.

Then, again, a requisite for active citizenship is an adequate comprehension and understanding of the principles of social and industrial justice. The proposed problems of to-day are not those involving political war; they relate to the rights of men, to a multiplicity of rights of property, which have come with this highly developed civilization of the present. As the economic régime is organized at present it is not necessarily final or perfect. There have been other industrial epochs. The present must be modified if it is to keep pace with the interests of men or it too will be replaced by another. The greatest political problems are those which involve the rights of capital and labor. The question of taxation has been a political question since the revolt of our forefathers from the mother country. The railroads with their involved potentiality, the express companies, certain aspects of banks, the mighty trusts and powerful combinations, interstate commerce, currency and the banking system, justice to the common man, industrial as well as political independence, vocational diseases, money,

corporations, a vast variety of considerations of both individual and social aspect claim immediate attention and solution.

These are questions which can no longer be settled on the basis of States' rights doctrine or protective tariff. Men must face the new issues and be unbiased in the consideration of the rights of capital and the rights of labor, since both are imperatively essential to the welfare of the human race. The time may soon come when a declaration of the industrial rights of man, both capitalist and laborer, will be enunciated by a new Thomas Jefferson and accompanied by a new settlement of the paramount issues of to-day.

These two elements, high-minded character and an intelligent demand for individual and social justice, are the stock in trade of the citizen. They are as necessary for him as a library and legal knowledge are necessary for a lawyer who intends to practise law; or as knowledge, skill, and remedies are necessary for a physician who proposes to practise medicine. Citizenship, an active interest in the government, is a worthy profession, at which a man must work if he desires prosperity and security of life and possessions.

Defending the Government.

The practice of citizenship includes on the part of the citizen a number of duties. To begin with,

it is his duty to defend the government in the last resort by his blood and his life if need demands. He is liable to military service within certain definite age limits. In some foreign countries a subject would be required to give to the service a period of two or three years, even in times of universal peace. In America, citizens are not required to serve in the army in times of peace, but may in times of war be summoned and even drafted for offensive and defensive war. But whether in the army or not, citizens everywhere are called upon to protect their country indirectly. They must furnish the sinews of war, the treasure for the maintenance of the volunteer army, for the upbuilding of the navy, for the establishment of good government to enforce just laws for the protection of men and property.

Casting a Vote.

Another duty of citizens is the exercise of the rights of the franchise whenever possible. The suffrage and citizenship are not and never can be coincident in the republic. In many States the right to vote is conferred by those States on the foreign born who have officially declared their intention of becoming American citizens, or have taken out what is known as their first papers, after a year's residence here. Other States require complete citizenship: native born or naturalized, and

of legal age. In States where women are not allowed the ballot the great majority are nevertheless citizens of this country and are entitled to its protection and benefits both at home and abroad. In the case of children, they too are citizens if born here, or when naturalized by their fathers' act. But they are not voters, even the native born, until the State has declared that the legal age has been reached.

Whenever a complete or prospective citizen has the right of suffrage it is his duty to exercise the right. The fundamental principles of the government of this nation require it. Ours is theoretically a popular government; it was not instituted solely for any single class; it is designed to do the greatest good to the greatest number. Unless all qualified voters express their will at the polls the fundamental purpose of the government may be defeated. For all who have the right of suffrage have been chosen presumably for their fitness. To prevent class legislation and representation by special interests it is necessary to have the vote of all voters. The suffrage is given to them with the expectation that they will use it. Scheming and designing men understand the advantage they thus possess in a vote, an advantage which is increased when the better citizens neglect this duty to the State. A selfish indifference on the part of professional and business men frequently allows the baser elements to rule to the injury of the people generally.

The voter needs to vote intelligently and to vote always whenever the opportunity offers; whether it is on the initiative, referendum, or recall, or whether it is for the candidates for office. He needs to know the mechanism of voting in order to vote correctly if voting-machines are used, to understand that he cannot vote for the candidate for president and refuse to vote for the nominee for vice-president. He must be interested in the judges of the election; in everything that pertains to the election directly.

Attending the Primaries.

A third duty to be assumed by the voting citizen requires him to attend the caucuses or conventions or to participate in primaries, or whatever other preliminaries may be in vogue. Whatever the method is that places in nomination the candidates, the citizen must participate in the movement, always endeavoring to improve it. It is proper that we have political parties; they help to secure free and full discussion. They have the advantage of organization, and after the candidate is nominated and has received the party's endorsement it will be difficult to secure the election of another. The first contest which largely determines the last one is in the nomination of fit candidates. The primaries or nominating convention should decide on the men; when good men are thus named the election then turns on the choice between parties and principles.

In giving heed to the foregoing duty a citizen must also see that good men are put in office, men who will exalt the office and not use the position with its power against the best interests of the people. Men who are willing to be the servants of the citizens should be chosen. There should be no unworthy men in public office any more than in the ministry, for both are honorable callings to serve fellow men.

God give us men. The time demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faiths, and willing
hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie.

Fighting Graft.

It is his duty to see that graft is impossible; to see that accounts are properly audited; to help create so high a regard for social rights of the community that no man of good repute would any more consider taking a bribe than he would sell for paltry dollars the rights and common virtues of the members of his family. Rome became great when her citizens were taught that the benefits of life were made possible by their government and that patriotism required in turn a personal sacrifice for the good of the Eternal City. It was the devotion of the Romans to Rome's welfare, coupled with

their recognition that it was each citizen's duty to help build up a great, healthful, convenient, and beautiful city that made Rome the most wonderful city of all ages. In place of graft and exploitation, in place of fraud and deceit in public life, there must be the honest Phidias, the exaltation of the public office-holder. The dangers to our liberties do not come from without, they are possible only from within. No national official can accept the gift of a foreign potentate unless Congress consents. The makers of the Constitution feared the influence of such a gift might make one disloyal. Special interests at home may cause favoritism to be shown unless the citizens are on their guard. The enemies of the nation most to be feared are citizens: first, the evil-intentioned citizen; secondly, the citizen who sleeps at his post of citizenship duty or is too partisan to support the best candidates when belonging to another party than his own.

Not only are good men to be placed in office and kept from the blighting influence of graft, but they are not to be left unsupported by the people after their election. The citizen must see that the officer does his duty. There need be no proof of graft. If the official is incompetent or indifferent or otherwise engaged, the citizen must bring pressure to bear upon the derelict. It may be well to have the commission form of government for the city, where responsibility can be readily placed; it might be

desirable to have the recall instituted as a safeguard against indifference and unworthy conduct by one who was exemplary before the election.

Supporting Good Officials.

The practice of citizenship will require that one support good men who have been elected to office. The forces of evil will assault the honest public man; he will need all the moral strength and encouragement his kind of men can give. The man who refuses to comply with the demands of greed will be embarrassed and annoyed at every turn. He may be unable to accomplish anything, his way will be thoroughly blocked. The good official must have the active support of his best constituents. He is like the pastor of a church, to be supported by all who sympathize with him. Evil men will give support to an evil official, and it will not be uncertain support. Good citizens must raise their voices, their hands, and their sums of money, if needed, to give the virtuous official timely encouragement, recognition, and oftentimes firmness. Vigilance is the price of liberty.

An imperative duty of the citizen is that he obey laws, for they are the laws of his country. The laws have been enacted by the legal legislative representatives of the people. Disobedience to those laws is disloyalty to the form of government under which he has chosen to live; and hence

breeds anarchy and disrespect for legislative enactments in general and for the Constitution. We call no man king; but the expressed will of the people demands loyalty and ready response. Laws are sovereign until repealed or set aside by the courts. There should be no dead-letter laws. A law should not outlive the conditions which caused its appearance. It should be repealed if it is not needed or desired. But as long as the law is on the statute books it should be respected and obeyed.

Enforcing the Laws.

Citizenship also requires one to help enforce the laws. Not only should the citizen obey the laws, but he must be compelled to keep them, if he will not otherwise. We allow lawlessness to thrive when office-holders are lax and fail to do their duty. The officer will usually do the behests of his constituents. They must insist upon law enforcement, upon the conviction of the guilty; they must ask that lawbreakers be brought to justice speedily without unnecessary delays, to be punished with certainty. We have been lax in this respect, allowing vastly more murders to go unavenged by law and more crimes to be committed generally than does England. If the laws were speedily applied there would be less crime.

The laws, when used, become a medicine against social disease and disorder. If promptly enforced

there would be little incentive to resort to mob law, that destructive rival of true law. There should be no justified appeal to any unwritten law year after year, when men have the freedom of securing the enactment of new laws easily. The citizen's security is in the law and its stern application.

Accepting Jury Service.

A duty of highest citizenship is to accept jury service when selected. The magnitude of business interests, narrow partisan concern, or indifference, cannot be offered as an excuse by the patriot. Men claim to have formed an opinion, to have views prejudicial to a fair consideration of the facts of the trial, in order to be excused and to escape jury service. The institution of the jury has been a bulwark of personal liberty. The jury is a democratic body of men selected to represent the community and on behalf of the people to act fearlessly on the facts submitted. This may naturally require that one try an indicted murderer; that he be separated from his business and family for weeks; that he submit to strict rule and discipline. This is extremely distasteful to many who are the most competent to serve on the jury. Social interests are here paramount to private, and for the best ends of good government the citizen must respond to its demands with willingness to serve in the measure of his ability.

Holding Public Office.

And then occasionally it becomes the duty of the citizen to hold office; not for personal reasons, for with graft eliminated the inducement to hold office must be the opportunity to serve the community. The man who is useful to the best interests of the people should be willing to give his time and effort for a season to the management of the people's business. The man who can make a success of his own affairs can be useful to society. There should be some compensation for his services; they should not be without remuneration as has been the case in some instances in England. Only the rich and well-to-do could take the position if no salary were attached. It should not be some trifling sum which would induce only mediocre men to respond; the pay should be fairly liberal, for the laborer is worthy of his hire, and the best man is by far the cheapest man for the place.

In conclusion, the practice of citizenship requires uprightness of character; also, that the citizen adequately inform himself on his obligations to the community, to society, to the individual. He must know what social and industrial justice require.

The citizen should vote, if qualified, on every and all issues and offices.

He should participate in the selection of candidates.

He should favor the best methods of securing that nomination, probably the direct primaries.

He should oppose graft and corruption in high places; favoring the commission form of city government.

He should elect honorable men of sterling worth to office.

He should continue his interest in his officials after they are chosen, as a banker does in his clerks.

He should be ever willing to extend the suffrage, or to restrict it when occasion demands and it can be legally done.

He should be fearless, unselfish, conversant with public affairs; he should assume his obligations cheerfully and fully, and try to improve his government as he would his own private business.

He should provide for community addresses on true patriotism and citizenship.

He should work for the interests of all classes of society.

He must obey the laws, and have dead laws repealed, for non-enforcement of laws breeds disrespect for law generally.

He should care for the distressed and dependent members of society.

He should hold office if needed.

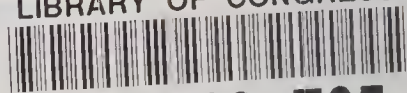
He should not be too busy to serve on juries occasionally.

He should consistently oppose the saloon and other social evils.

He should list his taxable property honestly for taxation.

He should promote the cause of education, advocate civic betterment, support the city movements through its organizations, such as a commercial club, and if wealthy he should return some of his wealth in the form of gifts for community use.

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